

A Naturopathic Approach to Detoxification

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Most of our water contains over 700 chemicals. Over 3000 chemicals have been added to our food supply. Ten thousand chemicals in the form of solvents, emulsifiers, and preservatives are used in processing and storage.

A healthy body has always been able to withstand a surprisingly high level of toxicity. But these days, toxins accumulate in our bodies faster than they can be eliminated. Now we have to deal with industrial chemicals, pesticides, food additives, heavy metals, anesthetics, and the residues of drugs ---- pharmaceuticals, legal (alcohol, tobacco and caffeine), and illegal.

Detoxification, the body's way of eliminating or neutralizing toxins, using the liver, kidneys, urine, feces, exhalation, and perspiration, is a natural process. It takes place continually, and works very efficiently as long as the amount of toxins in your body stays below a certain level (we all have our own levels of tolerance). But when the system is overwhelmed, your body's defense mechanism breaks down, and you might have to help the process along.

Many different toxins have been identified as threats to our health, so your body's ability to detoxify and eliminate toxins is one of the most significant determinants of health you have.

Indications that your body might need detoxification include headache, joint pain, recurrent respiratory problems, back pain, allergy symptoms, insomnia, acne, mood changes, arthritis, constipation, hemorrhoids, sinus congestion, ulcers, and psoriasis.

Heavy metals are becoming a major problem in our industrial society, where virtually everyone has a higher than normal levels, of these substances. Heavy metals (lead, mercury, cadmium, arsenic, nickel, and aluminum) are mostly derived from the environmental contamination. Common sources are industrial pollution, lead from the solder in tin cans and cooking utensils, cadmium and lead from cigarettes smoke, mercury from dental fillings and contaminated fish, and aluminum from antacids, antiperspirants and cooking utensils.

Heavy metals tend to accumulate in the brain, kidneys, and the immune system, where they can disrupt normal functions. Early signs of heavy metal poisoning are vague and often associated with other problems. Symptoms can include headache, fatigue, muscle pain, indigestion, tremors, constipation, anemia, pallor, dizziness and poor coordination. As toxicity increases, so do the severity of symptoms.

Studies have a strong correlation between behavioral difficulties and learning disabilities in children, and high body levels of heavy metals, especially lead.

Nutrients that help you contend with heavy metal poisoning include **high-potency multiple vitamin and mineral supplements such as Trophic's Complete Multiple Supplement; minerals such as calcium, magnesium, zinc, copper and selenium; vitamins C, B-complex and E; or a multi complex such as Douglas Labs Ultrabalance III ;sulphur-containing amino acids such as N-Acetyl Cysteine; and food with a high sulphur content, such garlic, beans, onions and eggs. EDTA is a chelating agent which binds to heavy metals in the bloodstream and 'escorts' them to detoxification. Cilantro in capsule or tincture form is a good chelating agent as well.**

Your Naturopathic Doctor can help you figure out which of these nutrients you need, and how much.

There's another category of toxins primarily dealt with by the liver which include food additives, drugs, alcohol, solvents (cleaning materials, formaldehyde, benzene, toluene, etc.) pesticides, herbicides, and other toxic chemicals. Toxicity of these substances can cause psychological and neurological symptoms such as depression, headaches, mental confusion, tingling in extremities, and abnormal nerve reflexes. Some studies have shown increased rates of respiratory tract allergies and certain cancers in people exposed for long periods of time to chemical toxins.

As you can imagine, your liver can get pretty overworked. Compounds which support liver's detoxification function include **Trophic's Trilipotropics (methionine, choline and inositol)** and botanical combos such as **Liv-tone containing dandelion root (taraxacum officinalis), milk thistle (silymarin murianum), artichoke leaves (cynara scolymus), and curcumin** .

The bacteria and yeast in your gut also produce toxins which can be absorbed, causing problems. These microbial toxins have been associated with a number of conditions, including liver disease, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, psoriasis, lupus erythematosus, pancreatitis, allergies, asthma, and immune disorders.

To reduce the absorption of these toxins, try to keep your diet rich in water-soluble fibers (those found in vegetables, pectin, guar gum or oat bran), and maintain your healthy gut bacteria with **Natural Factors Ultimate Probiotic** or **Primal Defense. Ground Flaxseed powder 1 tbsp/day** helps ensure the elimination of estrogens and cholesterol in your stool. This will also help reduce the burden on your liver which neutralizes toxins that would otherwise cause cellular damage, and would put further burden on the immune system which is responsible for cellular repair. Damaged or mutated cells are the foundation of cancer.

The kidneys are responsible for the elimination of the waste products formed by the breakdown of protein, such as ammonia and urea. **Wild Rose's 12 day Herbal Detox** is an easy to follow overall detox and includes a diet plan.

Various lab techniques are useful in detecting the toxins in your body. Hair mineral analysis will determine the level of heavy metals. These techniques still controversial for determining vitamin, mineral and electrolyte levels, but it is perhaps the best non-invasive method of assessing heavy metal levels. For determining exposure to toxic chemicals, first a detailed medical history should be taken. Then blood, liver and tissue can be tested for suspected chemicals. If microbial toxins are suspected, your Naturopathic Doctors can diagnose by clinical symptoms, medical history, or conducting stool cultures for parasites, bacteria and yeast. Yeast and parasite cleanses are commonly indicated

There are many different detoxification therapies. It is always best to find a Naturopathic Doctor who understands the concept of detoxification and formulate your own program with him or her.

Fasting, one of the oldest healing therapies know, means nothing to eat or drink except water (or specific substances, such as fresh juice) for a specific period of time. It is one of the fastest ways there is to increase elimination of waste. Consult your Naturopathic Doctor for advice regarding 'cleansing' or detoxification.

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